Impact of School Management Teams on Educator Job Satisfaction

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of School Management Teams (SMT) on educator job satisfaction in the Free State Province of South Africa. A school's learning environment depends on educators because they are directly involved in knowledge transfer. The SMT have a duty to create a school atmosphere in which a classroom educator can perform his/her job confidently and safely. The target population for this research study was SMT members (Heads of Department, Deputy Principals and Principals), as well as post level one educators (educators) from rural and urban schools. The explanatory sequential mixed method approach was used to collect data. Stratified random sampling was used during the quantitative phase via questionnaires, while purposive and convenience sampling were used for the qualitative phase via semi-structured focus group interviews. A significant finding was that consideration should be given to redesigning initial and in-service training programs for SMTs to incorporate leadership practices focused on building supporting relationships, setting guidelines, building positive school cultures, encouraging teamwork, involvement and team building.

Keywords: Communication, Educator Job Satisfaction, Educational Environment, Job Performance, School Leadership

1. Introduction and Background

It is the belief of the researchers that the answer to the substantial problems concerning education in South African schools, lies in the hands of School Management Teams (SMTs). SMTs consist of the people who are accountable for all school activities that occur in and around the school premises. The SMT leadership establishes the character of the school, the level of professionalism, the climate for learning, morale, and educator job satisfaction.

Educators' job satisfaction, defined as educator's affective reactions to their work or to their educational role (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011) is an important factor which guarantees that educators always give their best so that learners receive the best possible education. To ensure that educators can perform this role, motivation and support must be provided for by the SMTs at the school. Educators will generally be satisfied with their job if they have a good relationship with the SMTs of their school and are included in the decision-making process at their school. Salaries and compensation will be excluded as an aspect of educator job satisfaction since most educators are paid by the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

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According to Steyn and Van Niekerk (2012), most problems in schools arise from a communication breakdown. Singh and Rawat (2010) outline that enhancing educator's job satisfaction requires proper communication between educators and SMTs. As managers, SMTs are tasked with the responsibility of keeping their educators in check and maintaining a conducive environment suitable for education purposes (Maforah & Schulze, 2012). The impact of SMTs on the performance of educators is applied in a way that SMTs think, express and practice what they advocate. Steyn and Van Niekerk (2012) alluded that SMTs that are effective offer mentorship, support, provide information and act as role models for educators, which may positively influence educators' morale and job satisfaction.

The SMTs leadership skills develop by taking the best ideas from educators, to accomplish the school's objectives (Van Niekerk, 2012). It must be noted, however, that leadership and management are intrinsically related, and cannot be understood separately (Bush & Glover, 2014). The SMTs personal characteristics determine the development of their management skills. The SMTs (particularly the principal's) age, administrative experience, teaching experience, academic qualification, and gender principally determine the processes he or she will employ in managing the school. Thus, it may be said that leaders are required to establish good relationships with those under their control (Solomon & Steyn, 2017) through proper communication and motivation. Being compelled to work under a certain type of leadership will undoubtedly have a negative impact on educators (Machumu & Kaitila, 2014).

1.1 Factors That Impact on Educator Job Satisfaction

1.2 School Leadership

School leadership is an important factor that influences educators' motivation in the school. An efficient leader supplies direction for the school and leads educators to attain anticipated goals (Voon, Nqui & Ayob, 2011). Higher levels of job satisfaction ought to be experienced by educators if SMTs demonstrate strong leadership, supply educators with encouragement and provide co-operation and support in the implementation of educator responsibilities (Zengele, 2011; Graham, Hudson & Willis, 2014). School leadership actions promote trust, inspiration and motivation, and thus help to develop teaching performance. Positive leadership qualities of SMTs that may improve the satisfaction of an educator include promoting a healthy culture and climate, insisting on innovation, maintaining good ethical standards, and involving educators in adjusting school rules (Graham et al. 2014). SMTs with excellent leadership skills, such as the ability to offer equal treatment to all educators, create a conducive environment, which fosters teacher satisfaction.

Supervision is also important because SMTs have a sound knowledge of what they expect from the educators. SMTs can influence educators and, as such, considerate supervision and leadership tend to improve the job satisfaction of educators (Zengele, 2011). To comprehend the anticipated goals within the school, decision-making must take place. Swanepoel (2008) points out that a school leadership that shares decision - making responsibility will motivate educators to address educational problems.

2.2 Decision-making

A key characteristic of an effective school is seen when SMTs recommend that educators participate in the decision-making processes of the school (Cheng, 2008). According to Swanepoel (2008), decision-

making is a process of continuous choices, concerning what needs to be done to solve or prevent problems. Educators are at the forefront of a school and are aware of the difficulties that the school faces (Omobude & Igbudu, 2012). Therefore, the SMTs need to make use of participatory decision making, which contributes to educator motivation to achieve the school goals.

The involvement of educators in decision- making is seen as a step towards improving the professionalism of educators, as well as a means for SMTs to empower educators. The perception of educators of SMT practices is linked to the degree to which educators participate in decision-making. This varies from one school to another, depending on the issue or problem under consideration. Algoush (2010) identified five major advantages of increased decision-making by educators:

- enhance educator morale,
- up-to-date educators,
- educator communication development inside and among the school,
- increase learner incentive and drive; as well as
- improved support that assists to retain and attract excellent educators.

As implied by Maslow's esteem need, if the SMTs allow educators to participate in the decision-making process, educators are likely to experience job satisfaction, because they gain recognition by being known in the decision-making process. It is vital that decisions are communicated to all educators concerned. Therefore, effective communication is necessary for educators to enhance their work, in line with general educational prerequisites, to achieve the school goals. Cheng (2008) found that the efficacy of the decisions taken should be communicated.

2.3 Communication

The purpose of communication, according to Carl (2010), is the transfer of information and reminders of tasks to the educator. It can involve oral as well as written communication, including emails (Steyn & Van Niekerk, 2012). Communication is essential for school improvement and an influential reagent for sustaining and establishing trust. Communication is also important in seeking participation, as well as giving information to educators (Medwell, 2009).

In schools where there are definitive channels of communication, two-way communication is encouraged, and educators are informed on a regular basis about everything that happens in the school. A climate is also created where educators can experience job satisfaction (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2016). Ineffective communication between the educator and SMT has a demoralizing effect on educators. When educators are knowledgeable regarding changes in the school, they feel motivated to work together. The opposite is also true, when educators have little knowledge regarding changes in the school, they will encounter lack of motivation (Van der Westhuizen, 2012).

The SMT may be described as the engine that gives the school its power. Therefore, the SMTs communication must be effective to achieve the best results (Steyn & Van Niekerk, 2012). SMTs must strive for the principles of good leadership in communication, as stated in Chapter Two. The SMTs should maintain relationships and an effective 'driving style', including good communication skills and

techniques. The responsibility for communication includes being accessible to educators, maintaining open lines of communication with educators, and providing means for the educators to communicate frequently with the SMTs (Oberholzer, 2010). Ärlestig (2008) states that through communication, the SMT leads and unifies educators in the workplace, which is necessary for academic results and school improvement.

As forerunners in the school, the non-verbal communications of SMTs are significant in determining the success of their leadership, by negatively or positively guiding the school (Zengele, 2011). Consequently, SMTs need to be constantly aware of their communication behaviours (Carl, 2010).

3. Consequences of Poor Levels of Job Satisfaction in an Educational Environment

Educator job satisfaction thus has profound consequences for educators themselves as well as for the school development. Predominantly, it can impact teacher turnover, absenteeism, and school effectiveness. It is highly likely that educators will resign from their current post if their job satisfaction levels are persistently low. In other words, job satisfaction has a large influence on turnover (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009). Educators in schools with a higher rate of educator turnover tend to have a shorter period of tenancy (Buchanan, 2010).

Educators tend to entirely leave the teaching profession because of stress associated with work, lack of dedication in schools, feelings of powerlessness, vague expectations, lack of feedback, lack of acknowledgment, lack of supervision and job dissatisfaction (Buchanan, 2010). The manner in which SMT supervision is conducted towards educators may be partly to blame for the rate at which educators leave their work and are replaced (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009). In response to this, SMTs should firstly adopt a fair IQMS grading scheme for professional development. Secondly, SMTs should communicate effectively with their teaching staff. Thirdly, development and training programmes for educators should be conducted. Such programmes will help to improve instructional abilities.

Distributed leadership has the potential to increase satisfaction and decrease turnover. Harris and Spillane (2008) state that distributed leadership is characterized by more than one leader, and a shared leadership throughout a school. Consequently, distributed leadership positively impacts the performance of a school, as well the process of learning and teaching (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Leadership that is not distributed will lead to educator job dissatisfaction and may result in an educator leaving the school or profession (Brown & Wyn, 2009). Herzberg's two-factor theory stipulates that ineffective management and leadership may lead to job dissatisfaction and turnover intentions.

An effective leadership can boost well-performing educators and help poorly performing educators to improve. Larkin (2015) mentions that researchers have consistently found a negative correlation between job satisfaction, educator turnover and continuance commitment. Griffin and Moorhead (2010) singled out interpersonal relationships, promotional opportunities, working conditions, supervision, accomplishment, acknowledgment, and responsibility as factors that influence the educator's job performance. Furthermore, Simons and Buitendach (2013) established that educators who are unhappy and dissatisfied are unlikely to commit to their profession.

The style of leadership adopted by SMTs directly affects educator absenteeism in a school (Lucas, Bii, Sulo, Keter, Yano & Koskey, 2012). In low absenteeism schools, the SMT had a more directive leadership style. Absenteeism rates in schools are higher under authoritarian leadership. Lucas et al. (2012) assert that SMTs that adopt a democratic approach to management motivate their educators to feel a sense of belonging and, as a result, absenteeism rates decline. Al the foregoing findings and discussions highlight the value of gaining insight into the job satisfaction factors amongst educators so as to begin to find ways to remedy the apparent situation that prevails within the teaching profession. In the present investigation we aimed to determine some of these factors amongst educators in the Free State Province.

4. Research Method and Data Collection

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) describe the research strategy as the way in which the researcher proposes to conduct the research process. The strategy can comprise various methods such as action research, experimental research, phenomenology or explanatory sequential. The researcher employed the explanatory sequential approach. A two-phase explanatory sequential mixed methods design was applied. The motivation for applying an explanatory sequential approach is to assist in expounding and explaining the quantitative results acquired in the first phase of the research (Maree, 2012). The qualitative results will support the researcher in clarifying and unravelling the findings of the quantitative study (Creswell, 2014).

A quantitative research approach was used by the researcher in the primary phase of data collection for this particular study. A questionnaire was used in this part of the research study and the data was accumulated from a sample of the population applicable to the study. The target population for this research study was SMT members (HODs, Deputy Principals and Principals), as well as post level one educators (educators and senior educators1) from rural and urban schools in the Free State province. The population was mainly composed of female educators, a total of 313 educators, females comprised 60.4% (N=189), and males made up the rest (N=124; 39.6%). Most educators were in the age group 26 – 35 years (N=129, 41.2%). The age groups 37 – 45 years and 46 – 55 years were equally represented (N=72, 23%).

The Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency levels or reliability of the existing data set, and this suggests how directly connected a set of statements or sets are. The Cronbach Alpha which assesses the internal consistency reliability of the research instrument for this research study was applied as the reliability coefficient for the Likert scales (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the information collected from questionnaires. Within descriptive analysis, reviewing data and obtaining a synopsis towards outcomes are reflected while in deductive analysis, data would be influenced for testing initial data, reliability, testing hypotheses, findings relation and strength of relations amongst variables. The Null Hypotheses were stated with the following variables in mind.

Hypothesis 1: Gender

There are no statistically significant differences in the opinions of male and female educators in terms of SMT support strategy decision making affecting job satisfaction, and SMT support strategy operation affecting job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Age groups

There are no statistically significant differences in the opinions of educators of different age groups in terms of SMT support strategy decision making affecting job satisfaction and SMT support strategy operation affecting job satisfaction.

The descriptive method according to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2012) state that the descriptive method shows how data is spread over a wide and variable range. The questionnaire played a crucial role in guiding the researcher in indicating the degree to which most respondents responded similarly to an assumption query. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the most and least occurring scores are indicated faster by the frequency distribution. The level of statistical significance is often expressed as the so-called p-value. Depending on the statistical test one has chosen (in this case the Independent Samples Test), a probability calculation (i.e. the p-value) is made by observing one's sample results. To ascertain whether a hypothesis statement is statistically significant, the p-value has to be less than 0.05. This means that there was a 5% or less chance (5 times in 100 or less) that the difference in the opinions of educators between different IV (gender and age groups) is statistically significant. Alternatively, if the chance was greater than 5% (5 times in 100 or more), one would accept the hypothesis (Tavakol & Dennick 2011).

To gather qualitative data, focus group interviews were conducted with purposefully sampled participants. Focus group interviews, according to Doody, Slevin and Taggart (2013), are a qualitative data collection technique, in which data is collected amongst group interaction on a selected subject. The questions asked during the focus group interviews were based on the results obtained from the questionnaire. The questions were formulated to determine similarities amongst educators in terms of the factors that had a bearing on their job satisfaction. The SMTs and PL1 educators from 12 Schools in the Free State province were chosen using the convenience and purposive sampling procedure. The participants in the focus group interviews were altogether 33 educators and 31 SMT Members (20 HOD's, 6 Deputy Principals and 8 School Principals).

In qualitative research, data analysis is aimed at the identification of patterns, features, and themes (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011) and by using a wide-angled lens to gather a richness of information regarding the breadth and depth of the phenomena under study. The gathered information is unlocked by means of a coding process. In this study, qualitative data was themed and reported on as such. The data from the focus-group interviews were explicated by means of thematic and content data analysis methods. During the focus-groups, participants were asked to briefly express the aspect of the SMTs that gave them the most satisfaction or displeased them the most. The focus-group comprised different genders and, in some schools, different races. Participants also had varied years of teaching experience within the education system and had taught numerous grades at their respective schools.

Participants in this study were given an option to participate or not. Participants were also given the guarantee of the chance to withdraw if they so wished. The initial step in acquiring informed consent was to apply for ethical clearance from the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee (FRIC) of the Faculty of Humanities at the Central University of Technology, Free State.

5. Results

The Quantitative data results revealed that the impact of leadership and management on the sample indicated that the SMTs had a 52.4% positive impact on the educators, while 36.1% had a negative impact on educators, whilst 11.5% were neutral. The impact of the SMT leadership style of the sample indicated that the SMTs displayed a 41.9% positive impact on the respondents, while the majority (58.1%) of the respondents felt that the SMTs had a negative impact.

The impact of the SMTs communication indicated that the SMTs had a 68,7% positive impact on the educators, while 31,1% of the respondents said that the SMTs communication skills had a negative impact. The general impact of SMTs on the respondents revealed that most of the respondents (58.5%) felt that, in general, the SMTs had a negative impact on educators. The SMTs had a 28.1% positive impact in general on educators. 13.4% of the respondents were neutral.

An independent samples t- test was conducted to test the gender hypotheses, as there were only two levels of the independent variable (IV) gender, namely male and female. However, for the age group hypotheses, an ANOVA test was conducted since these IVs have more than two levels.

5.1 Gender and Support Strategy Decision Making

An independent groups t-test was used to test the difference in educators' opinions based on gender in terms of the SMT support strategy, Decision-making. The Levene's test (Table 2) indicated equal variance assumed [$F = 1.377$, $p > 0.05$ (0.242)]. The results in Table 1 revealed no statistical significance difference between Male (M=3.190, SD=0.993) and Female (M=3.178, SD= 0.858), as predicted by $t(311) = .091$, $p > 0.05$ (0.927). Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Males and females approximately displayed equal satisfaction towards SMT characteristic, Decision-making, based on the mean differences.

Table 1: Group statistic for gender on the SMT support strategy decision-making

Group Statistics					
	Respondent's Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SMT Decision Making	Male	124	3.1895	.99305	.08918
	Female	189	3.1799	.85795	.06241

Table 2: Independent samples T-Test for gender on the SMT support strategy decision-making

Independent Samples Test for Gender on SMT Support Strategy Decision-making										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
SMT Decision Making	Equal variances assumed	1.377	.242	.091	311	.927	.00962	.10560	-.19816	.21741
	Equal variances not assumed			.088	235.947	.930	.00962	.10885	-.20481	.22406

5.2 Gender and Support Strategy Operations

An independent group t-test was used to test the difference in educators' opinions based on gender in terms of the SMT support strategy, Operations. The Levene's test (Table 4) indicated equal variances assumed [F = .954, p > 0.5 (0.330)]. The results in Table 3 revealed a statistically significant difference between Male (M=3.694, SD=1.075) and Female (M=3.240, SD= .979), as predicted by t (309) = 3.842, p < 0.05 (0.000), d = 0.442. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Based on the mean differences, males displayed more satisfaction towards the SMT characteristic, Operations.

Table 3: Group statistics for gender on the SMT support strategy operations

Group Statistics					
	Respondent's Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SMT Operations	Male	122	3.6940	1.07530	.09735
	Female	189	3.2399	.97914	.07122

Table 4: Independent samples t-test for gender on the SMT support strategy operations

Independent Samples Test for Gender on SMT Support Strategy Operations											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
									Lower	Upper	
SMT Operations	Equal variances assumed	.954	.330	3.842	309	.000	.45413	.11821	.22153	.68673	
	Equal variances not assumed			3.765	240.789	.000	.45413	.12062	.21652	.69174	

5.3 SMT Age Group and Decision Making

A one-way ANOVA (Table 6) indicated no statistically significant differences in SMT support strategy Decision-making across the five levels of the IV age groups [F (307) =1.384, p>.05(.230)]. From the results in Table 5, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The highest level of satisfaction was reported for the age group 56+ (M=3.526, SD=.993), and the highest dissatisfaction was reported for the age group 26-35 (M=3.100, SD=.965).

Table 5: Group statistics for age on the SMT support strategy decision- making

Descriptive Statistics for Age and SMT Support Strategy Decision-making			
SMT Decision-making			
Respondent's Age	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
20 - 25	3.1250	20	.77587
26 - 35	3.1008	129	.96497
37 - 45	3.1528	72	.62031
46 - 55	3.3056	72	1.05000
56+	3.5263	19	.99266
Total	3.1837	313	.91232

Table 6: ANOVA test for age on the SMT support strategy decision-making

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SMT Decision Making * Respondent's Age	Between Groups	(Combined)	5.725	5	1.145	1.384	.230
	Within Groups		253.961	307	.827		
	Total		259.687	312			

5.4 SMT Age Group and Operations

A one-way ANOVA (Table 8) indicated no statistically significant differences in SMT support strategy, Operations, across the five levels of the IV age groups [F (305) =.988, p>.05(.425)]. From the results in Table 7, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The highest level of satisfaction was reported in the age group 37-45 (M=3.519, SD=1.002), and the highest dissatisfaction was reported for the age group 20-25 (M=3.033, SD=.823).

Table 7: Group statistics for age on the SMT support strategy operations

Descriptive Statistics for Age and SMT Support Strategy Operations			
SMT Operations			
Respondent's Age	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
20 – 25	3.0333	20	.82292
26 – 35	3.4740	128	1.10721
37 – 45	3.5185	72	1.00217
46 – 55	3.3850	71	1.01207
56+	3.1754	19	1.01451
Total	3.4180	311	1.04022

Table 8: ANOVA Test for age on the SMT support strategy operations

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SMT Operations * Respondent's Age	Between Groups	(Combined)	5.345	5	1.069	.988	.425
	Within Groups		330.092	305	1.082		
	Total		335.437	310			

The results from the Qualitative data revealed that the autocratic leadership style seemed to be the most prevalent in their schools, in which the SMTs made decisions on their own, creating a hostile school environment and instilling fear, even leading to insubordination at times, as stated by participants. A participant said that: "The SMTs and more specifically the principal takes decision alone without the consent of educators' participation, he acts like a dictator, therefore I will classify him as an autocrat."

However, there were a few participants that alluded to the fact that their SMT used a democratic leadership style. Only two schools' participants stated that their SMT used a participative leadership style. The results from the focus group interviews revealed that, in general, educators in the Free State are often satisfied with SMT communication practices. Educators rated their SMTs highest on their communication of mission and goals, and the lowest on feedback and communication. Perhaps this is because SMTs are aware of the importance of communicating the school's mission and goals for educator satisfaction and school improvement. Participants in the focus-group presumed that proficient formal communication inside the school has a positive effect upon their job satisfaction, and a participant stated: "Sound

communication within the school [and] proper and clear communication between the educators and SMT impacts educator job satisfaction positively."

Educators voiced the understanding that they were omitted from the decision-making process, especially regarding promotions. The data from the interviews exposed that the educators were displeased with their partial decision-making participation. It might be said that the SMTs use of more inclusive forms of decision making, and communication might reduce the barriers for educators in becoming motivated and productive, by creating more viable means of support. Participants stated the following: "The management team who holds meetings and discusses certain issues do not share the outcome with the ordinary educator. The management team sometimes forgets to pass it on to educators." While one participant said the following: "…throughout staff meetings our SMT do not acknowledge our proposals, or discuss the matters on the agenda, other than their own topics. The SMT autocratically adopt whatever they desire." During the focus-group interviews, educator contribution in school decisions continually appeared as an area that is absent in numerous schools. Most participants claimed that if educators are allowed participation in the decision-making process, it will cause an increase in their job satisfaction.

The general agreement in the literature is that the decision of educators to leave or stay in a school is prejudiced by the way the school is run. It seems possible that the features of the SMT could also affect the turnover of the educator. As school leaders, the SMT is one of the most important factors in the administration of a school. However, no quantifiable studies have directly clarified the impact of SMT on the turnover of educators. Most participants in the focus-group interviews stated that the lack of leadership, or being micromanaged, was the main reason that influenced their decision to leave. Participants indicated that micromanagement only created a negative relationship and work environment and led to their feeling dissatisfied, untrustworthy, and unhappy. Participants in the study revealed that they did not respond well to micromanagement, controlling, and demeaning attitudes

6. Discussion and Recommendation

Most participants said that their SMT practices an autocratic leadership style. This means that educators are not part of the decision-making process of the school, which could be linked to the theory of transactional leadership. This is in co-ordinance with Zhu, Sosik, Riggio & Yang (2012) who state that educators do not form part of management or leadership but are instead given instructions and supervised by the Transactional Leader. The analysis has proven a negative connection between SMTs' autocratic leadership style and educators' job satisfaction. Educators are displeased with the SMTs' autocratic leadership style, because an autocratic SMT, especially the principal, does not allow opportunities for educators to work without restrictions, whereas the democratic SMT shares new concepts and ideas with educators. This finding shows that SMTs need to adopt leadership style that supports educators

The researcher recommends that the SMT, as effective leaders must take responsibility and guide educators. SMTs should adapt according to the situation and should not force educators to perform duties, such as extra mural activities. Forcing educators to perform duties could only influence them negatively. This corroborates the view of Dewan and Dewan (2010) who state that it is essential for SMTs to be adaptable and to be able to implement the leadership style relevant to the specific situation. Consideration should be given to redesigning initial and in-service training programs for SMTs to incorporate leadership

practices focused on building supporting relationships, setting guidelines, building positive school cultures, encouraging teamwork, involvement, and team building. SMTs that are less effective can learn from more effective SMTs in a safe setting for example through paired school visits. This concept, if initiated, could prove helpful. In addition, SMTs that are already doing well could meet periodically to learn from each other to improve their effectiveness. a democratic leadership style ought to be encouraged. SMTs must avoid hierarchical decision-making structures, which excludes input from educators. SMTs need to adopt up-to-date approaches in school leadership, such as a visionary leadership approach to allow joint participation with educators in decision-making and in the implementation of such decisions. Enabling educators to assume leadership roles enhances the self - esteem and job satisfaction of educators, which in turn leads to higher levels of achievement. Job satisfaction is affected due to a lack of clear communication between SMTs and educators. Communication between all stakeholders in a school is vital for the proper transfer of information, ideas on teaching and learning, and policies affecting educators.

The findings concluded that the manner in which SMTs communicate with educators has a substantial effect on educator performance and job satisfaction in schools. The researcher recommended that SMTs adopt the best communication practices to achieve direct and effective communication, which will help to increase educators' job satisfaction. Face-to-face communication should take place by having weekly departmental subject meetings to give and receive feedback, even if it just for five minutes during the school interval. Speaking to each other face - to - face is the best way to communicate. It allows for deeper discussion. There are times when emails or written notes are useful but face - to - face conversations are still required to make a meaningful difference. Face-to-face communication is ultimately to provide and receive feedback, improve the educational process as a team, and enhance educators' job satisfaction. SMTs can attend different SACE CPTD (South African Council for Educators Continuing Professional Teacher Development) workshops where all SMT members are seen as educators and therefore can experience the effectiveness of each targeted communication practice.

The overall findings of this study revealed significant differences between the SMT support strategy: operations and educators job satisfaction. These findings indicated that educators, male or female, perceived that, SMT support strategy operations had an impact on their job satisfaction. For the different age groups, the SMT strategy operations had no effect on their job satisfaction. SMTs can make remarkable contributions to schools' by accomplishing the educational goals and improving educator job satisfaction, if they are sufficiently prepared for their leadership role. This can be accomplished by ensuring that ambitious and enthusiastic SMTs are exposed to the SACE CPTD programmes, grounded on needs analysis. Involving SMTs in structured CPTD programmes (comprised of professional responsibilities such as workshops, attending meetings, attending professional development conferences and seminars) will empower SMTs to make independent decisions, adjust teaching programmes, endorse collaboration among educators, and engage in educator monitoring, evaluation, and professional development. CPTD programmes permit SMTs to strategically school plans and goals.

Educator participants voiced their displeasure at being excluded from the decision-making process. Different decision areas emerged in the participating schools and the educators in these schools differentiated among these areas. The emerging areas included subject allocation, discipline management, school activities, fundraisers, professional development, and day-to-day procedures. In contrast with the

quantitative results, findings indicated that educators, male or female as well as different age groups perceived that decision-making by the SMT does not have an influence on their job satisfaction. SMTs must as far as possible include educators in all decision-making processes particularly the decision area of curriculum planning. Educators prefer to focus on educator-related concerns about teaching and curriculum and it is within this preference that educators' may be inspired to participating in a decision-making process. Increasing educators' participation in decision making especially educators in the age group 26-35 could be an effective management strategy that could satisfy educators' self-actualisation and esteem needs and retrain educators in the profession. Once these needs are met commitment to the school will result, as well as greater job satisfaction. This is in agreement with Woolfolk (2016) who states that if any of these needs are not fulfilled, the educator will recurrently attempt to fulfil that need; that is, the need turns into a motivational factor.

The manner in which SMT supervision is conducted towards educators may partly be to blame for the rate at which educators leave their work and are replaced (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009). Commitment, job satisfaction and performance will increase if educators feel positive about teaching as a profession, while absenteeism and educator turnover will decrease SMTs ought to be well equipped with leadership and management skills to create conditions that are conducive for educator motivation. Educators new to the school, as well as student teachers at the school should have access to an experienced and effective educator mentor. SMTs should aim to ensure that new educators have reduced teaching loads or teaching assignments that increase the odds for educator success (e.g., decreased number of preparations, smaller class sizes, therefore fewer struggling learners). Developing solutions for educators with the intention to leave may include empowering such educators - this may include providing career prospects (based on merit and teaching experience to avoid educators' stagnation within a certain post-level), allowing autonomy in work responsibilities such as appointing educators as subject heads or organiser of an event or activity. Empowering educators effectively allow them to be part of the decision-making process in the school. Schools will be more successful if educators are involved in planning for the needs of their learners, as well as their needs as professionals.

7. Conclusion

The wide-ranging findings from this study provided policymakers and practitioners with particular and up to date information on areas to improve educator satisfaction. Due to the continuous changes in the education system and increasing fears among educational managers about the low retention rate of educators, job satisfaction This research study addresses a gap in research regarding the impact of SMTs on educators' job satisfaction. The pragmatic results indicated that participants experienced substantial job dissatisfaction that discouraged them and prohibited quality education in schools under certain circumstances.

This is an extremely important issue, bearing in mind that one of the main objectives of the Department of Basic Education is to provide quality education at all levels of the education system. To achieve this goal, competent and satisfied educators are required. The primary goal should therefore be to minimize the dissatisfaction of educators and maximize satisfaction for the benefit of learners and educators

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of SMTs on educators' job satisfaction in the Free State Province. Overall, the literature on job satisfaction among educators in South Africa indicates that there is considerable job dissatisfaction among educators. The research showed numerous decisive dynamics that SMTs could use to develop strategies to promote educators' satisfaction at their schools. It is therefore essential that SMTs identify support tactics that will help improve educators' job satisfaction. This study calls on SMTs to support their educators to enable them to fulfil their mission to cultivate learners as future leaders in South Africa.

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